

Partridgeberry Herb Profile

Also known as

Mitchella repens, Squaw Vine, Checkerberry, Deerberry, Winter Clover, Hive Vine, One-Berry, Twin-Berry, and Squaw Berry

Introduction

Partridgeberry is an evergreen herb that grows in the woodlands of North America. It is best gathered in the early spring through the early summer. Called a "uniquely American remedy", it was used by Native American women to help prepare the body for childbirth, and is believed to help relieve painful menstruation by toning the uterus, and for fluid retention. Several noted herbalists of the past and present recommend drinking an infusion of partridgeberry with raspberry leaves during the last weeks of pregnancy to help prepare the body for labor, or with cramp bark and passionflower for dysmenorrhea. In addition, many writers note that partridgeberry exerts a calming influence on the nerves, and Susan Weed, author of *Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Years*, writes that it was used to enhance fertility. Partridgeberry has been used by Native Americans for centuries, for a variety of issues including as an additive to love potions, and as an additive in ceremonial smoke.

Constituents

Tannin, bitter principle, saponins, mucilage, unspecified alkaloids, glycosides, resin

Parts Used

Whole plant including leaf and stems (excluding roots)

Typical Preparations

Berry tea and infusions have been used by Native American women for centuries to increase fertility, relieve menstrual problems and prepare the body for childbirth. The uses are mostly traditional, and recommended by practitioners of holistic medicine. There's no supporting research, but the anecdotal evidence is strong.

Precautions

Partridgeberry has been found to be safe, although it may have abortifacient qualities if taken in large enough quantities, so please only use under the guidance of a qualified herbal practitioner if you are pregnant.

Botanical: *Mitchella repens* (LINN.)

Family: N.O. Rubiaceae

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---**Synonyms**---Partridgeberry. Checkerberry. Winter Clover. Deerberry. One-berry.

---**Part Used**---Herb.

---**Habitat**---United States.

---**Description**---The plant grows in dry woods, among hemlock timber, and in swampy places; in flower in June and July. The leaves resemble those of clover and remain green throughout the winter. The fruit or berry also remains bright scarlet, is edible, and nearly tasteless, dry, and full of stony seeds. The use of the drug is peculiarly American.

---**Constituents**---It has been found to contain resin, wax, mucilage, dextrin, and what appears to be saponin.

---**Medicinal Action and Uses**---Parturient, diuretic, tonic, astringent. Beneficial in all uterine complaints. It resembles in its action pipsissewa (*Chimaphila*), for which it is often substituted. It is taken by Indian women for weeks before confinement, in order to render parturition safe and easy. A herbal physician should be consulted for a safe and effectual preparation.

It is used in dropsy, suppression of urine, and diarrhoea. The following preparation is a cure for sore nipples: 2 OZ. of the herb (fresh, if possible), 1 pint of water. Make a strong decoction, strain, and add an equal quantity of good cream. Boil the whole down to the consistency of a soft salve, and when cool, anoint the nipple every time the child is removed from the breast.

---**Dosages**---Of a strong decoction, 2 to 4 fluid ounces, two or three times a day. Fluid extract, 1/2 to 1 drachm.